

Strategy Research Project

Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: A Laissez Faire Approach

by

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Abstract

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The generation and application of military force often presents military leaders with moral dilemmas that are unique to the profession of arms. As the Army fully implements its doctrine of mission command, Army leaders will be expected to make difficult and consequential decisions in ethically ambiguous situations, but to do this with even less guidance and oversight than they experience today. In this environment, the quality of a leader's character, who they are as a person, and thus their ability to make correct and independent discretionary judgments, matters even more than in the past. Drawing heavily on current Army doctrine and data, this paper examines the Army's approach to the development of personal character in its leaders. This paper also evaluates the effectiveness of these efforts, provides summary conclusions, and offers recommendations for action.

Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: A Laissez Faire Approach

Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.¹

— General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr.

The generation and application of military force is not done in an ethical vacuum and often presents military leaders with moral dilemmas that are unique to the profession of arms. As the Army moves forward towards full implementation of its doctrine of mission command,² it will require even more from its leaders at all levels, and especially its junior ones. Leaders will be expected to correctly make difficult and consequential decisions in ethically ambiguous situations, but to do this with even less guidance and oversight than they experience today. In this environment, the quality of a leader's character, who they are as a person, and thus their ability to make correct and independent discretionary judgments, matters even more than in the past.

The Army places great value on leader character and even singles it out in doctrine as “essential to effective leadership.”³ Given the often adverse conditions faced in combat, during post conflict draw-downs, and in garrison, a fair question quickly emerges: Is the Army's approach to developing the personal character of its leaders effective? To examine this question, we must consider how the Army defines character, how it develops it, and whether or not its current methods are meeting the challenges facing the Army today. We will begin by looking at the how the Army approaches character in its current doctrine.

The Army's Doctrinal View of Character: An Institutional Overview

The Army defines character as “the sum total of an individual's moral and ethical qualities,”⁴ the essence of “who a person is, what a person believes, and how a person

acts.”⁵ To better contextualize this definition and the Army’s view on it, we must start with Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 1, *The Army*. This document states that: “The Army is built on an ethos of trust, which buttresses four other essential characteristics of our profession: military expertise, honorable service, esprit de corps, and stewardship.”⁶

The Army’s very identity, the essence of which is expressed by the Army Values,⁷ relies “on a bedrock of mutual trust among Soldiers, leaders, families, and the American people.”⁸ The Army clearly places a premium on trust and defines it as the “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.”⁹ Vertical trust, up and down the chain of command, is essential to the effectiveness of the Army for two primary reasons. First, a leader’s trust in his or her subordinates is an essential requirement to execute mission command. Without it, mission command simply cannot work.¹⁰ Second, trust in leaders is what allows Soldiers to accomplish difficult and dangerous tasks even when the legal consequences of disobedience are less than the potential consequences of obedience (wounding or even death).¹¹ It is this combined trust that serves as the glue that holds units together and allows individuals to stand resolutely in the face of the “most horrific environments,”¹² but also to know that difficult decisions in garrison are also done in accordance with the Army’s highest ethical standards.

In summary, as the Army seeks to fully implement mission command, it clearly applies trust in the context of Leader - Soldier relationships that are based heavily on the character, ability, strength, and/or truth of the individuals involved. To narrow the scope of this discussion further, we will focus primarily on the attribute of character, which is best defined and explained within the current leadership doctrine of the Army.

Current Army Leadership Doctrine

Leadership is the preeminent element of combat power because of the way it brings unity to the other seven elements (information, mission command, movement and maneuver, intelligence, fires, sustainment, and protection) and multiplies their effects, not merely adds to them.¹³ The Army currently defines leadership as “the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”¹⁴ An Army Leader is simply “anyone who by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals.”¹⁵ The Army clearly differentiates the process of leadership from the authority of command¹⁶ and uses a leadership requirements model to describe its expectations of its leaders in two broad categories: attributes and competencies. Attributes are primarily internal traits and consist of character, presence, and intellect, while competencies are primarily related to actions and skills that consist of leading, developing, and achieving.¹⁷ While all of these attributes and competencies are important, the only one that the Army views as an inseparable component of successful leadership is character.¹⁸

As an attribute, the Army defines character as the sum total of an individual’s moral and ethical qualities,¹⁹ the essence of “who a person is, what a person believes, and how a person acts.”²⁰ The Army goes on to define the four component parts of character as:

- The internalization of the Army Values
- Empathy
- Commitment to the Warrior Ethos/Service Ethos

- Discipline

In further describing character, the Army states that the two central components of character are an individual's values and beliefs.²¹ Beliefs are defined as closely held convictions accepted as true; while values are beliefs that shape an individual's actions.²² Personal beliefs and values are central to a leader's identity; and a personal "understanding of oneself ... ultimately determines a leader's character."²³ It is important to note that the logical flow of this doctrine is a bit disjointed as it travels from four component parts of character (Army Values, Empathy, Commitment, and Discipline), to two central components (individual values and beliefs), and ultimately to self awareness.

In summary, the Army clearly states that character is "essential to effective leadership,"²⁴ describes it in doctrine, and believes that it is based on personal values, beliefs, and ultimately self-understanding. As character is critically important to leader effectiveness, the Army has a vested and enduring interest in ensuring that the personal character of its leaders is sufficient to meet their growing responsibilities and challenges over the course of their careers. So how does the Army approach personal character development? For this we need to examine its doctrine on leader development, a subordinate component of its leadership doctrine.

Leader Development: What and How

The Army's basic premises on leadership development are two-fold. First, since originally published in 1948, Army leadership doctrine has consistently viewed leadership as a process of influence and a skill that can be developed.²⁵ Second, leaders should develop themselves, their subordinates, and their organizations.²⁶ Commanders are further specifically charged with developing their subordinate

leaders²⁷ because leader development, coupled with effective training, “form[s] the cornerstone of operational success.”²⁸ While “leader development is a continuous and progressive process spanning a leader’s entire career,”²⁹ the Army indicates that the preponderance of leader development occurs as a result of operational assignments and self-development.³⁰ The Army expends significant resources to develop leaders with the attributes and competencies described previously, but takes an unusual approach with the attribute of character.

Character Development as a Component of Leader Development

Unlike the development of the other five attributes and competencies of the Army leadership requirements model (presence, intellect, leading, developing, and achieving), character development is singled out as being primarily an individual (self) responsibility.³¹ This conceptual principle, a hold-over from previous doctrine,³² and its supporting assumptions serve as the doctrinal basis for the Army’s “hands-off,” or laissez faire,³³ approach to the character development of its leaders.

Army doctrine goes on to describe character development as occurring at three levels: individual, leader, and organizational/unit. At the individual level, the process of building character involves “day-to-day experience, education, self-development, developmental counseling, coaching and mentoring” in which individuals develop themselves through “continual study, reflection, experience, and feedback.”³⁴ Adoption of “good values and making ethical choices” is a critical part of this process.³⁵

At the second level, leaders are expected to “encourage, support, and assess the efforts of their people,”³⁶ serve as the organization’s “ethical standard bearer,” and set a proper ethical climate.³⁷ In building a proper climate, leaders are assisted by “the chaplain, staff judge advocate, inspector general, and equal opportunity specialist.”³⁸

At the organizational level, units also contribute to character development when their “ethical climate nurtures ethical behavior.”³⁹ This ethical environment will cause Soldiers to “think, feel and act ethically,” and thereby “internalize the aspects of sound character.”⁴⁰ Army doctrine states that “consistently doing the right thing forges strong character.”⁴¹ While all the aspects of character development are important, the Army is committed to the view that the ultimate determinant of a leader’s character remains founded on an understanding of oneself.⁴²

Despite the importance the Army places on character and its development, when it comes to actual guidance on how an individual is expected to develop themselves, Army doctrine is strangely silent. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, Army Leadership, does not specifically discuss the issue of character development. Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, Army Leadership, says virtually nothing on the subject beyond the importance of “continual study, reflection, experience, and feedback.”⁴³ The chapter discussing the leader competency of “Develops,” and more specifically, the sub-section on “Develops Self” provides no further guidance. Additional clarification is not offered in ADP 7-0, Training Units and Leaders, its companion document ADRP 7-0, the Commander’s Handbook for Unit Leader Development, nor the Virtual Improvement Center Catalog on Leader Development materials.

Assumptions Underlying the Army’s Doctrine on Character Development

The Army’s laissez faire approach is based on three important assumptions about how Soldiers, and specifically leaders, develop personal character:

1. Army Soldiers and leaders know what is right and want to live ethically.⁴⁴
2. Consistent ethical conduct develops strong character.⁴⁵

3. Leaders will develop personal character commensurate to their increasing responsibilities through self-guided study, reflection, experience, and feedback.⁴⁶

These assumptions serve as a foundation for the Army's doctrinal approach and explain why the Army believes that this approach will provide the desired institutional results. All three of these core assumptions merit careful scrutiny and invite two critical questions: Why did the Army make these assumptions, and, more importantly, are they valid? While answering the first question would help us understand the reasoning behind these assumptions, the far more important question involves the actual validity of the assumptions. If one or more assumptions are found to be invalid, the Army would be prudent to re-evaluate its approach to character development. We will begin this analysis by briefly considering why the Army may have made these assumptions.

Analysis

In examining why the Army may have made these assumptions, we must consider whether or not the Army has a broadly understood, and agreed upon, causal theory for how it can assess and develop the personal character of its leaders. If it does, then the selection of assumptions would logically flow from this theory. If, however, the Army does not have such a theory, then the decision likely resulted from an amalgamation of lowest common denominators and least contentious ideas. Another possibility is that the Army may not even realize that it is making major assumptions in this area. Unfortunately, a recent study by the Army's Center for the Army Professional Ethic indicates that the latter two possibilities (lowest common denominator, unaware of assumptions) are the more likely explanations. This assessment indicates that the "policies and governing documents for Army leader development are disjointed and

dated. Roles and responsibilities for leader development are not clearly defined and are sometimes conflicting.”⁴⁷ Yet in its efforts to meet this challenge, “the Army still lacks an integrated Human Development effort ... [and] ... internal subject matter expertise in the behavioral, social, and other Human Development sciences,” and must therefore “overly rely on external experts to implement crucial programs.”⁴⁸ In summary, the Army appears to lack coherence in its approach to leader development and to have outsourced its thinking on the topic. While this is of some importance, the more critical question remains: “Are these three assumptions about character development valid?”

While the Army’s first assumption, that Soldiers and leaders know what is right and want to live ethically, can be challenged both quantitatively and qualitatively, this analysis will focus primarily on Army wide quantitative data. This data is available from many sources, but we will briefly concentrate on four that provide an objective and broad description of current trends:

- The Army’s 2012 report entitled, “Generating Health and Discipline in the Force Ahead of the Strategic Reset,” otherwise known as the “Army Gold Book.”
- Technical Report 2012-1: The 2011 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Main Findings.
- Technical Report 2011-1: The 2010 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Volume 2, Main Findings.
- Technical Report 2011-3: Antecedents and consequences of toxic leadership in the U.S. Army: A two year review and recommended solutions (Toxic Leadership Report).

Two important caveats must be stated before continuing: First, statistics can only be as accurate as the underlying reporting. Many offenses are handled under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice vice criminal proceedings and/or simply go unreported. Secondly, general officer data was not included in either CASAL report referenced above. Even accounting for these mitigating factors, the documented trends are concerning and cast significant doubt on the validity of this assumption.

Reporting from the Army Gold Book indicates that in 2011, 6% of the active duty population (42,698 Soldiers)⁴⁹ committed over 78,000 offenses, to include:

- 2,811 violent felonies
- 28,289 non-violent felonies
- 47,162 misdemeanors⁵⁰

In looking at these raw crime statistics and doing some preliminary analysis, some interesting trends emerge. By comparing the number of offenses relative to their specific segment of the Army population, one can draw two important data points.

Table 1. US Army Criminal Misconduct by Rank⁵¹

Rank	Overall Crime %	Overall % of Army	Ratio
E1-E4	68	43	1.58
E5-E6	22	28	.79
E7-E9	4	12	.33
WO1-CW5	1	3	.33
O1-O3	3	8	.38
O4-O6	1	6	.17
E5 – O6 Composite	31	57	.54

First, as rank increases, criminal misconduct decreases. While this could be accounted for in many ways, the causation for this drop is not adequately explained either by the study or by the Army leader development model. This drop could be caused by a number of factors, such as the elimination of offenders from the service at lower levels, the maturing effects of age and family responsibilities, and/or the results of the Army's past developmental construct for character development. Second, and most importantly, 31% of the documented, non-UCMJ, criminal acts in the Army are committed by Army leaders, specifically NCOs and commissioned officers. This statistic alone casts doubt on the validity of the Army's assumption that "Army Soldiers and leaders know what is right and want to live ethically." While these statistics are a useful starting point, we can gain additional insights to further test the validity of this assumption by looking at the two most recent CASAL reports.

The 2010 and 2011 CASAL reports provide rich data regarding the views leaders have on the character attributes (as defined by doctrine) and ethics of other leaders. Time series data from the 2011 CASAL report (Figure 1) initially offers some encouraging statistics, especially regarding the improved perception subordinates have of their superior's core competencies.

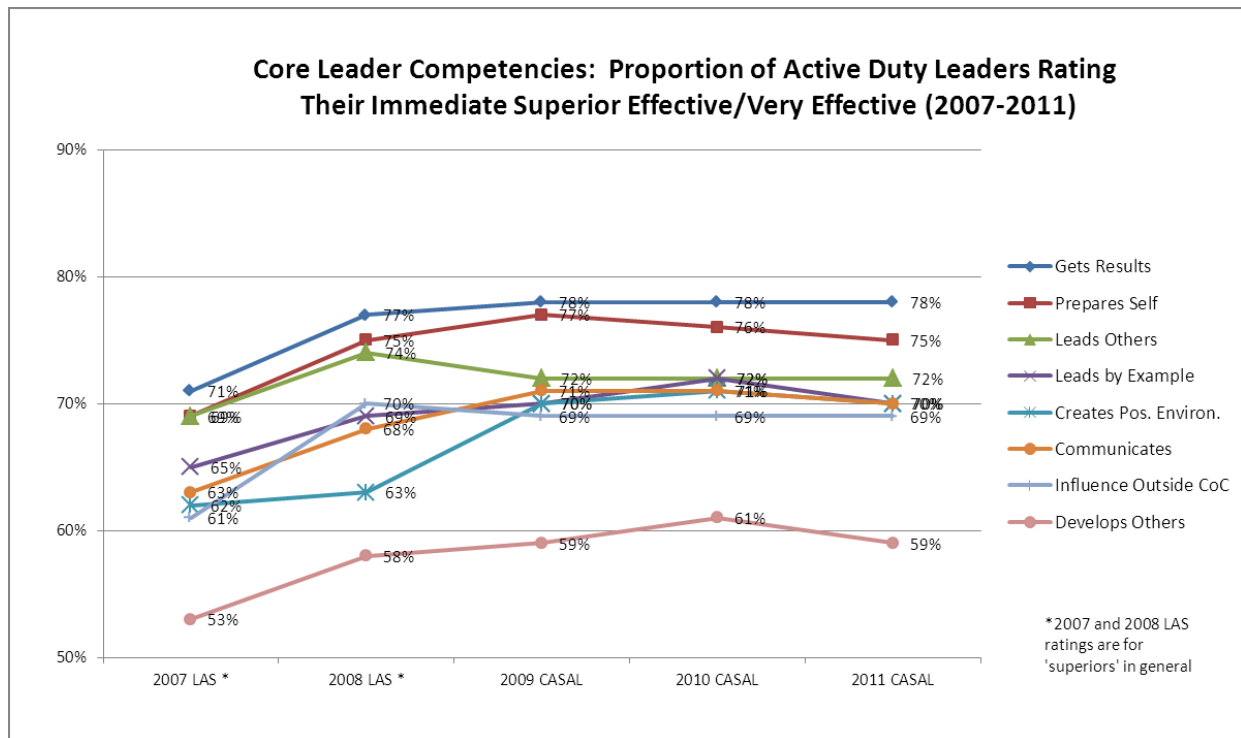


Figure 1. Core Leader Competencies⁵²

A closer look, however, also indicates that these perceptions have plateaued, in some cases begun to decline, and, most importantly, that nearly a third of subordinates (30%) do not believe that their superiors either create a positive environment or lead by example.⁵³

Additional survey data shown in Figure 2 regarding three of the four attributes of an Army leader's character (Army Values, Warrior Ethos, and Empathy) indicates that the respondents still view approximately one fifth of their leaders as marginal or poor in one or more of these critical attributes of leadership.⁵⁴ This is a disappointing finding that highlights the difference between espoused values and leader actions.

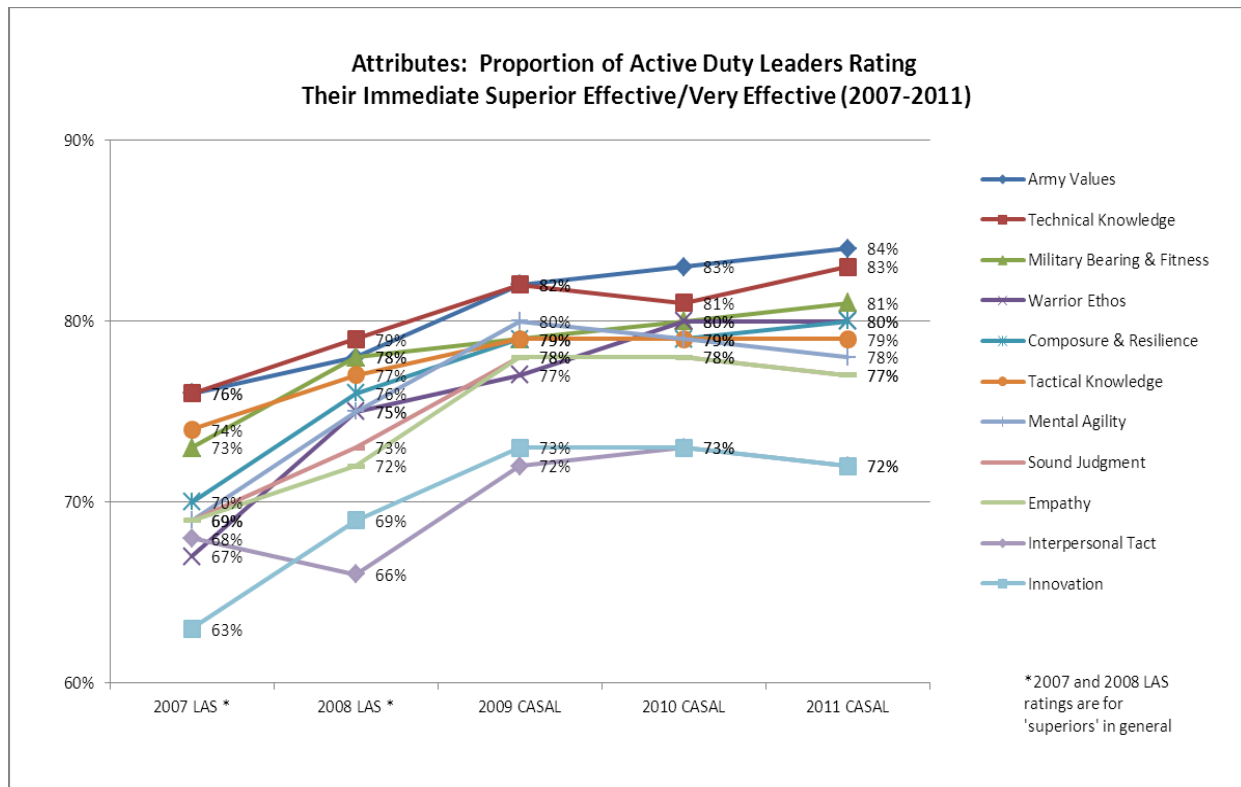


Figure 2. Leader Attributes⁵⁵

The 2010 CASAL report offers an interesting insight in its analysis of the perceptions of the ethics of the Army's leadership. This section was not surveyed in the 2011 report so recent trends are not available, but the 2010 data still provides useful insights for this analysis. First, over a third (37%) of leaders surveyed in 2010 believed that "senior leaders are more concerned that subordinates achieve results rather than the methods used."⁵⁶ Additionally, as shown in Figure 3, respondents indicated that while 83% believed that their immediate superior demonstrated the Army values, only 72% believed that the leaders they interacted with displayed good ethical behavior.⁵⁷ The perception that over a quarter of Army leaders do not display good ethical behavior runs contrary to the Army's assumption that "Army Soldiers and leaders know what is right and want to live ethically."

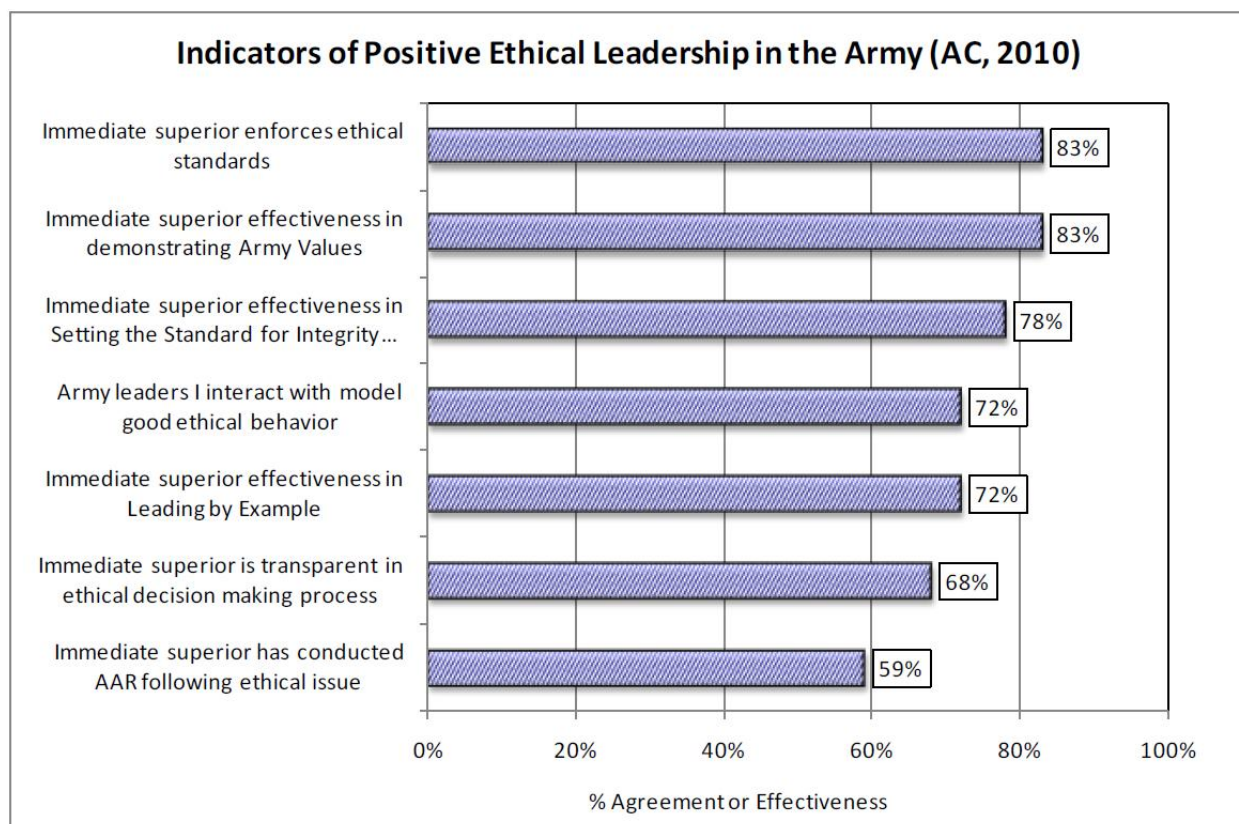


Figure 3. Indicators of Positive Ethical Leadership in the Army⁵⁸

While this data provides valuable insights into the current perceptions of Army leaders, an assessment of the validity of this assumption would be premature without examining actual leadership practices as documented in the Army's 2011 report on toxic leadership.

The 2011 Toxic Leadership Report was the Army's first exclusive report on toxic leadership and relied heavily on the CASAL reporting data sets from 2009 and 2010 as well as other academic studies. The report documented several dangerous trends within the leadership of the Army. The report broadly defines toxic leaders as those who "work to promote themselves at the expense of their subordinates, and usually do so without considering long-term ramifications to their subordinates, their unit, and the Army

profession.”⁵⁹ This definition, while helpful, is better understood in the broader context offered in the report:

Toxic leadership, like leadership in general, is more easily described than defined. Although descriptions (e.g., assholes, abusive supervisors, bad leadership, bullies, corrosive leadership, dark leadership, destructive leadership, harassing leaders, health endangering leaders, intolerable bosses, jerks, tyrannical leaders, negative leaders, etc.) and definitions of toxic leadership vary, there are behavioral consistencies. Common behaviors that are repeated by toxic leaders include: avoiding subordinates, behaving aggressively toward others, denigrating subordinates, hoarding information, hoarding job tasks, blaming others for their own problems, overly critical of work that is done well, and intimidating others.⁶⁰

The report frames the corrosive effects of toxic leadership in its impact on “Soldier well-being, retention, and mission accomplishment” and clearly states that unfortunately, “the best Soldiers are the ones who are most likely to be affected by toxic leaders.”⁶¹ Paradoxically, toxic leaders are often viewed as effective and reasonably likely to achieve increased responsibilities.⁶² However, perhaps their greatest damage to the Army as a profession comes from the ability of toxic leaders to produce a disturbing and self-replicating legacy through the 18% of subordinates who emulate them.⁶³

In assessing just how much toxic leadership exists in the Army, survey data is not encouraging. The report documents that “not only is toxic leadership prevalent, but the majority of leaders considered it a problem,” to include:

- 55% of field grade officers
- 61% of company grade officers
- 60% of warrant officers
- 60% of senior NCOs
- 66% of junior NCOs⁶⁴

While the report clarifies perceptions of toxic leaders and attempts to separate them from “derailed” leaders, “the vast majority of U.S. Army leaders observed a toxic leader in the last year, and over a third indicated that they had first-hand experience with 3 or more toxic leaders.”⁶⁵ The study closely links toxic leadership to ethics, which perhaps helps in explaining why 12% of respondents in a 2011 Army survey stated that “they had been pressured to cover up issues or act unethically,” while “18% agreed that it would be hazardous to their career to speak up about ethical violations.”⁶⁶

In looking at the data describing the number of toxic leaders as well as the number of “derailed leaders,” one must naturally ask a difficult, but simple question: *why does toxic leadership exist to the extent that it does in the force?* Answering this question can quickly become uncomfortable when we reasonably consider the possibilities that either individuals have failed to develop themselves properly, the Army as an institution has failed to assess, evaluate and/or eliminate them, or perhaps that significant numbers of Army leaders are simply unprepared and unable to serve in a profession whose “values and standards are too high for just anyone to live by them.”⁶⁷

In considering the evidence provided by leader criminal behavior, the survey data on perceptions of other leader character and ethics, and the degree of toxic leadership in the Army, one cannot help but conclude that the Army’s assumption that Soldiers and leaders inherently know what is right and want to live ethically is seriously in question.

The second assumption the Army makes is that individuals develop strong character by engaging in consistently ethical behavior, or more simply, they become good by doing good. This is a reversal of the “Be, Know, Do” pattern of thought in which the “Be,” or character, in conjunction with the “Know,” drives the “Do,” or action. Army

doctrine appears to contradict itself when it states that “ethical conduct must reflect genuine values and beliefs.”⁶⁸ In effect, the Army proposes that actions must be in accordance with our values and beliefs (character), and that character is developed by correct actions. This circular logic results in an obvious “chicken or the egg” argument that Army doctrine does not adequately address, nor resolve.

While no group of individuals can be expected to be entirely without the moral failings common to humanity, the number of senior leaders felled annually by unethical conduct requires us to at least consider whether the cause in each case was either a brief lapse in judgment, a change in the nature of an individual’s character for the worse, or whether the leader’s true character may have been hidden at lower ranks through pragmatic rule following at the expense of true character development. If the latter case is true in some situations, then the implications are that skillful rule following at lower levels can potentially cover over character flaws, and that the individual was able to provide the appearance, or “presence” in terms of Army leadership doctrine, of character until such time as they were promoted to a higher level of responsibility than their character could handle. This, in effect, could be interpreted as the “Peter Principle” applied to character in which people are “promoted beyond the level of [their] ability.”⁶⁹

The weaknesses pointed out by both the beliefs/actions argument (circular logic) along with the “Peter Principle” (promotion beyond ability) applied to character both cast serious doubts on the adequacy of the assumption that actions develop character.

The final assumption, that leaders will develop personal character commensurate to their increasing responsibilities through self-guided study, reflection, experience, and feedback, not only raises some tricky questions that are not adequately answered, but

the assumption also conflicts with current data from Army surveys. Even assuming that leaders will find adequate time to effectively develop their character as the Army expects, several important questions need to be answered:

- How does a leader objectively assess their own character and then meet the Army's expectation for developing it at a sufficient rate?
- Does what an individual studies and reflects upon matter? To wit, is studying the philosophical or religious teachings of Buddha, Mohammed, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Plato, Immanuel Kant, the Bible, or Confucius of equal benefit and value?
- Is unguided reflection useful without the application of adequate critical thinking skills and/or mentorship?
- What should commanders be doing to ensure leaders have the correct experiential learning opportunities to develop their personal character?

As mentioned previously, Army doctrine is nearly silent on what to study and offers little help for self development to either leaders or to their commanders who assist them. While some commanders publish helpful reading lists, etc., the 2011 CASAL report documents that 33% of Army leaders do not know “specifically what they need to do to develop as a leader,” to include 44% of company grade officers.⁷⁰ This finding is surprising as it directly contradicts respondent data indicating a strong belief among leaders in the effectiveness of self development.⁷¹ This set of statistics is compounded by data indicating that the leader attribute of “develops others continues to be the lowest rated core competency across all levels [of leadership],”⁷² and leads one to wonder if the Army is not expecting the “blind to lead the blind.” This is further reinforced by survey data that indicates that only 40% of leaders believe that their unit leader

development efforts have had a positive impact on their development, 60% believe that the unit does not make time for self development, and nearly half believe that there is little “support for leader development at the unit level.”⁷³ Only 59% of respondents believe that their superiors deliberately identify and/or place them in experiential leader development opportunities. In summation, only 61% of Army leaders are perceived as effective at developing the next generation of leaders.⁷⁴ Mentoring, as an art and science, is clearly an Army weakness that limits the ability of Army leaders to reach their full potential in all areas, to include their personal character.

Two other factors are worth brief mention. The Army’s thinking on this assumption suffers from the same inadequacy discussed earlier regarding the apparent lack of an accepted and understood causal theory of how leaders develop character. Even more specifically, whose paradigm should a young leader accept and model? In the competing marketplace of useful developmental approaches, which one, or ones, does the Army accept? Which ones does it reject, and why? Unfortunately, the Army’s approach to character development models appears to mirror that of Admiral Ernest King’s toward logistics when he stated that “I don’t know what the hell this logistics is that (Gen) Marshall is always talking about, but I want some of it.”⁷⁵

Second, survey data from the 2012 CASAL study indicates that “Prepares Self” is among the top three highest rated leadership competencies.⁷⁶ This initially seems to contradict the previous data offered on criminal activity, views on leader character and ethics, and the exercise of toxic leadership. However, these disparate statistics make far more sense if one considers the possibility that respondents associated preparing themselves for increased responsibility with only tactical and technical skills in mind

while not adequately considering their personal character as an area that could be, or even needed to be, improved.

The potential for the “blind leading the blind”, the lack of a causal theory for development, and the disconnect between survey data regarding “develops self” and actual character-related behaviors, all cast serious doubt on the validity of this final assumption that leaders will adequately develop themselves.

Conclusions

I began this paper by asking whether or not the Army’s approach to developing the personal character of its leaders was effective. The Army’s approach, which I characterized as “laissez faire,” singles out personal character as “essential to effective leadership” and then declares that individual Soldiers, vice the Army, bears primary responsibility for its development. Individuals are expected to develop themselves through “continual study, reflection, experience, and feedback”⁷⁷ in order to shape their personal values, beliefs, and ultimately, self understanding, as these serve as the basis for their character. This effort is to be supported by mentoring and unit efforts, although the Army provides virtually no guidance on how to assess character or facilitate its development.

Unfortunately, my primary conclusion is that the Army’s current approach is not sufficiently effective to meet the challenges posed by either the implementation of mission command, or by the future operating environment. While the topic of character development is often emotionally charged and exceptionally complex, the Army’s own data and statistics point to several serious inconsistencies between what the Army’s doctrine holds and the observed results it is producing. I can only conclude that the result is that the Army’s approach to the development of character in its leaders is at

best questionable, and at worst, seriously flawed in its concepts. While many specific conclusions could be drawn from this research, the following four emerge as both the most compelling, and those most urgently requiring attention and action.

Conclusion 1 – *The Army does not have a broadly understood, and agreed upon, causal theory for how it can assess and develop the personal character of its leaders.*

The Army has neither an agreed upon method to assess and develop the personal character of its leaders (vice merely enforcing behaviors), nor has it provided an adequate framework to leaders to guide either their own, or their subordinate's, character development.

Conclusion 2 – *The Army's three primary assumptions about the development of personal character are questionable and should be immediately re-examined.* In light of current behavioral and cultural trends within society toward moral diversity and ethical relativism, the Army should immediately re-evaluate both its base assumptions and its approach to character development. If these assumptions are found not to be valid, as suggested by this paper, the Army will have to adjust its doctrinal approach to character development in order to achieve its desired developmental goals for its leaders.

Conclusion 3 – *The Army does not know, and cannot know with confidence, if the current method of character development will achieve its desired institutional goals.* The lack of a broadly understood and agreed upon framework for how to assess and develop personal character reduces the Army's ability to evaluate its efforts in this regard to little more than debatable conjecture. Even the findings of its most recent CASAL report are hotly contested. While the quantitative data offered in this paper points to troubling trends, without an accepted framework and means for the

assessment and development of personal character, it seems implausible that the Army will ever know with confidence whether or not its current approach is effective.

Conclusion 4 – *The Army is assuming excessive operational and institutional risk if it does not meet the challenge of developing the personal character of its leaders.* The Army does an exceptional job in developing the technical and tactical abilities of its leaders. And yet, despite character being an inseparable component of successful leadership, the Army believes that individuals will develop themselves to the level desired by the Army with little or no clear guidance. This carries with it exceptional, and currently unarticulated, risk to the institution in two primary areas. First, with leaders being placed in positions in which they must make significant moral and ethical decisions with increasingly less supervision and oversight, who they are in terms of their personal character matters even more. Second, breaches of character by all ranks will be highlighted ever more severely to the public in the age of mass media. This, in turn, will amplify the corrosive effects of these breaches on the trust relationships both internally and externally to the institution.

At a personal level, and similar to many other battalion commanders, I have had the disappointing experience of seeing officers and NCOs under my command make career-ending decisions based on weakness of character. I observed two fellow battalion commanders relieved for cause due to character failures, and, along with the rest of the Army, watched in dismay as far too many senior leaders failed their own tests of character. In every single case, there was an immediate and significant impact to the mission at hand. Based on the data presented in this paper, I am chagrined by the

Army's current approach and concerned that the risk to the institution is larger than we might expect.

These conclusions, and the prevailing laissez faire approach to character development that they describe, document a clear and direct challenge to the Army. But they also provide an exceptional opportunity. I am of the opinion that the Army can seize a tremendous opportunity to shape its younger generation of leaders if it acts soon. Given that the Millennial Generation is "open to change"⁷⁸ and the U.S. military is one of the most respected institutions in America,⁷⁹ the Army would likely find a receptive audience to a more involved role in their character development. A statement from the recent US Army Profession Campaign Annual Report sums up this opportunity well: "Army Professionals are looking for the Army to refocus on professional values. Army Professionals voiced broad support for developing, training, and educating specific institutional characteristics that define the Army as a profession, as well as listing the individual attributes that identify Army personnel as professionals."⁸⁰

In conclusion, the Army will do the profession, and the nation, a great service by taking a hard and sober look at the role the Army should play in the development of the personal character of its leaders. If the Army does not meet this challenge, it will accept additional risk to mission accomplishment and the credibility of the Army as a profession. Within this challenge is also a great opportunity to shape a generation of young leaders who may be more willing to grow than we might think.

Endnotes

¹ H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Norman_Schwarzkopf,_Jr. (accessed October 30, 2012).

² “Mission command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations.” U.S. Department of the Army, *Mission Command, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-0* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, May 2012), 1.

³ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 2012), 3-1.

⁴ Ibid, 3-1.

⁵ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership, Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 2012), 5.

⁶ U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 1* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 2012), 2-1.

⁷ Ibid, Forward.

⁸ Ibid, Forward.

⁹ Ibid, 2-2.

¹⁰ Ibid, 2-2.

¹¹ Ibid, 2-2.

¹² Ibid, 2-2.

¹³ Ibid, 2.

¹⁴ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22*, 1.

¹⁵ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22*, 1.

¹⁶ Ibid, 4.

¹⁷ Ibid, 5,6.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 2012), 3-1.

¹⁹ Ibid, 3-1.

²⁰ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22*, 5.

²¹ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22*, 3-6. Note: Army doctrine is somewhat confusing on this topic as it tends to use character and integrity interchangeably and clearly emphasizes that integrity, defined as the ability to do what is right, legally and morally, is also a critical part of a leader’s character. See U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22*, 6.

²² Ibid, 3-6.

²³ Ibid, 3-5 - 3-6.

²⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 2012), 3-1.

²⁵ Ibid, 1.

²⁶ Ibid, 8-9.

²⁷ U.S. Department of the Army, *Training Units and Developing Leaders, Army Doctrinal Publication 7-0* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 2012), 1.

²⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, *Training Units and Developing Leaders, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 7-0* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 2012), 1-1.

²⁹ Ibid, 1-2.

³⁰ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 7-0*, 7.

³¹ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22*, 3-5.

³² U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership, Field Manual 6-22* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, October 2006), 4-12.

³³ “A philosophy or practice characterized by a usually deliberate abstention from direction or interference especially with individual freedom of choice and action.” Merriam-Webster, Laissez-faire. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/laissez-faire> (accessed March 4, 2013)

³⁴ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22*, 3-5.

³⁵ Ibid, 3-6.

³⁶ Ibid, 3-5.

³⁷ Ibid, 7-3.

³⁸ Ibid, 7-3.

³⁹ Ibid, 3-5.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 3-5.

⁴¹ Ibid, 3-6.

⁴² Ibid, 3-6.

⁴³ Ibid, 3-5.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 3-6.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 3-6.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 3-5.

⁴⁷ U.S. Army, *US Army Profession Campaign Annual Report, April 2, 2012*, 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 16.

⁴⁹ This number appears to include Reserve Component Soldiers who served on active duty during the year as otherwise the 6% figure would indicate an active duty end strength of over 700,000.

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of the Army, *Generating Health and Discipline in the Force Ahead of the Strategic Reset*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, January 2012), 97.

⁵¹ Ibid, 98.

⁵² Ibid, 8.

⁵³ U.S. Department of the Army, *Technical Report 2012-1: The 2011 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Main Findings* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, May, 2012), 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 12.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 12.

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of the Army, *Technical Report 2011-1: The 2010 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Volume 2, Main Findings* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, May, 2012), 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 40.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 40.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 2.

⁶¹ U.S. Department of the Army, *Technical Report 2011-3: Antecedents and Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army: A Two Year Review and Recommended Solutions* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, June, 2011), 2.

⁶² Ibid, 20.

⁶³ Ibid, 20.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 21.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 35.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 23.

⁶⁷ Dr. Don M. Snider, "The Moral Corrosion within Our Military Professions," November 27, 2012, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/index.cfm/articles/The-Moral-Corrosion-within-Our-Military-Professions/2012/11/27> (accessed December 13, 2012).

⁶⁸ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22*, 3-6.

⁶⁹ The Peter Principle is a belief that, in an organization where promotion is based on achievement, success, and merit, that organization's members will eventually be promoted beyond their level of ability. Wikipedia – Peter Principle. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Principle (accessed February 22, 2013)

⁷⁰ U.S. Army, *Technical Report 2012-1*, 59.

⁷¹ Ibid, 59.

⁷² U.S. Army, *Technical Report 2011-1*, iii.

⁷³ U.S. Army, *Special Report 2011-1*, 2.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 1.

⁷⁵ Defense Acquisition Portal, "Quotable Logistics Quotes," <https://dap.dau.mil/career/log/blogs/archive/2010/06/07/quotable-logistics-quotes.aspx> (accessed February 14, 2013).

⁷⁶ U.S. Army, *Technical Report 2012-1*, iv.

⁷⁷ U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22*, 3-5.

⁷⁸ The Pew Research Center, "Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change," February 24, 2010, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/> (accessed January 15, 2013).

⁷⁹ The Pew Research Center, "War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era," October 5, 2011, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/war-and-sacrifice-in-the-post-911-era/6/#chapter-5-the-public-and-the-military> (accessed January 15, 2013).

⁸⁰ U.S. Army, *US Army Profession Campaign Annual Report, April 2, 2012*, 6.